

How Do We Approach God?

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[0 : 00] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 55. This is in the Sing Psalms version, Psalm 55, page 71 of the psalm book.

We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 8 on the tune of St. Columba. O God, please listen to my prayer. Do not ignore my plea, my anxious thoughts.

Make me distraught, O hear, and answer me. We'll sing from verse 1 to 8 to God's praise. St. Columba.

O God, please listen to my prayer. O hear, and answer me. I am troubled by the voice of foes, by their malicious stare.

For they bring suffering to me, their hatred I must fear.

[1 : 43] Within me anguish grips my heart.

Death's terror's heart come near. I tremble and am terrified.

I am overwhelmed by fear. Oh, that I lie, a dove had wings.

Then I would fly away. And be at rest. I sleep from here.

And then the desert stay. And would I do my hiking place.

[3 : 00] And would I do my hiking place. For refuge take my flight.

Far from the raging of the storm.

And from the helpless mind. Amen. Let us come to God in prayer.

Let us pray. Lord our God our Father in heaven we do thank you that you're the one who hears our prayer and we've come even anew today offering a prayer of praise and worship to you we thank you that you're the one who is able to help in all our different needs that you're the one who gives us all that we need from day to day even as we look back over the past week we think of the many blessings we've had with food on the table clothes to wear homes to sleep and to abide in we thank you for all the different things we have and so much we take for granted and we just pray that you will help us and encourage us Lord to always look and trust in you we thank you for the way the psalm described that you are a hiding place a place of refuge for us but we thank you that you have not hidden yourself from us we thank you that you are showing yourself to us in your word and in all that you do for us and may you bless us as a people bless oh Lord we pray our young folk in particular just now as we pray for the sunday school and the creche and the tweenies we thank you to see families gathered together here today and for so many young people and we pray Lord that in their young years you will look after them that you will bless them and keep them we think two of those who have gone on to university or are going away to university soon we pray Lord that you will watch over them as well and be with them we thank you for the joy of children who have been part of this congregation and indeed your church far and wide you know as we think of baptism and the blessing in that too Lord we pray for families who prepare for that remember them and all who have been baptized in our church all we have seen oh Lord maybe over many years maybe have moved on to different parts of the country or even the world but we thank you that you are the God who watches over all and we pray Lord that you will bless us that you will look down upon us that your word will speak to us today and you that you will pardon all our sin as we ask all these things in Jesus name amen it's good to see you here today hope you've had a good week hope you haven't been eaten by the midges as you were coming into church today they're bad this morning I was going to show you something

I've got here can you see that it's it's not the one I wanted to bring it's it's a bucket of blocks I've got one that's much bigger than this with bigger blocks but there's a retired minister who stays next door and he borrowed them and he hasn't given them back he's got all so much spare time just now he's just playing out in the garden with his blocks but I was looking at this and there's things that we've often played with maybe not just the young folks here the older folks there are things that haven't changed over the years just playing with building blocks and one of the things we can often

do is we can build little houses but one other thing we used to do is always try and see how high up we could build the building blocks and there was something that was mentioned to me the other day was if we try and build up the building blocks in this way and thinking to ourselves if we put up a block for every good thing that we've done do you think that will get us as high as God do you think that will help us to reach God and many people sort of try and play this game they try and build up all these blocks on top of each other and what happens is the higher you get the wobblier the tower gets and eventually it's going to fall don't think I'll go too high in case it falls down on Ali's head but we play these games with building blocks and we'd see and try and build up this tower high high high as we can and you think of all the good things that you've done maybe say to yourself well I tied in my room this week I'll put one block up I did my homework that's another block I ate my food well that's another block and the tower is getting higher and higher you're thinking to yourself [7 : 51] I can get so high I can reach God but that's not how it works because the more we start looking to ourselves and the good that we've done as we build this tower it's just becoming wobblier and wobblier and eventually it's just going to collapse it's going to fall down and that's what we're looking at in our Bibles today we're going to look at an account of Jesus telling a parable telling a story about two men who went to pray one's called a Pharisee the other's a tax collector and the Pharisee he thought he was a good man and he was looking to God in this way of building his tower and saying Lord I've done this I've done that I've done the next thing but he was focused on himself and what happens his tower comes tumbling down but the tax collector he saw himself as a sinner there was nothing good he had to offer God all he did was bow before him and pray to him have mercy on me as sinner and that's what God did for him he showed mercy to him he didn't have anything to bring to God but himself and a heart that was crying out to him and so it's a reminder to us we don't build our lives and say Lord look at all the good things I've done and try and build this tower ourselves to reach up to God because we'll only make a mess of it but we see that God has come down to us in Jesus and he says just come and pray to me and I will hear you and I'm able to forgive so let's build our lives not with pride building ourselves up but humbly just looking to God and trusting in him we're going to say the Lord's prayer together so we'll say the Lord's prayer our father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever amen we're going to sing to God's praise in psalm 65 this is in the scottish psalter version psalm 65 page 297 of the psalm books i'm going to sing from verse one to the end of double verse four praise waits for thee in sion lord to thee those page shall be o thou that hear art of prayer all flesh shall come to thee we'll sing from verse one to four and the tune is saint andrew we stand to sing praise waits for thee in sion lord to thee those page shall be o thou that hear an art of prayer praise all flesh shall come to thee iniquities i must confess prevail against me do but as for us praise all of our transgressions then parched away shall thou

praise all of our transgressions then parched away shall thou bless you bless bless bless bless
bless bless We surely shall be satisfied With thy abundant grace
And with the goodness of thy house Even of thy holy place We'll turn to read together in God's
Word in the Gospel of Luke in chapter 18.

Luke chapter 18, reading from the beginning down to verse 14. Where we see here two parables that Jesus tells.

And the parables come immediately after Jesus having spoken about the coming of the kingdom of God. And how before that he himself would have to suffer many things.

[13 : 56] So we read in Luke 18 at verse 1. And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not to lose heart.

He said, In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, Give me justice against my adversary. For a while he refused. But afterwards he said to himself, Though I neither fear God nor respect man, Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, So that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect who cry to him day and night?

Will he delay long over them? I tell you, He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, When the Son of Man comes, Will he find faith on earth?

[15 : 06] He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous And treated others with contempt. Two men went up into the temple to pray.

One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, Or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector standing far off, Would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, But beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner.

I tell you, This man went down to his house justified, Rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, But the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

Amen. And may God bless. That reading from his word. We'll join together in prayer once again. Let us pray. Lord our God, our Father in heaven, As we hear your word, It may be a passage that we've so often heard over the years.

[16 : 27] We can be so familiar with many of the parables That we see Jesus teaching. We can be familiar with them as stories Perhaps we've learned from childhood. Stories that we perhaps miss the real meaning behind them.

And we just pray today that as we open up your word, And as we hear it, As we seek to study it together, That by your spirit you will minister to us. That you will indeed humble us, As we have read in your word, That you might exalt us.

That you might lift us up. That by looking to you we will realize How unworthy we are in all our sin. But yet, O Lord, may you help us to see That that is the very reason you sent your son into this world.

That though we could not exalt ourselves, He was exalted. He was taken up. He was beaten. He was cursed in so many different ways.

He was put to death. But yet, O Lord, we are reminded in your word Even death itself had no power over him. For we are reminded today on the first day of the week That he is risen.

[17 : 38] That we come worshiping our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Who is risen. Who is ascended. Who is at the right hand of God. Who is even now making intercession for us.

So that as we come offering up our prayers, It is in and through his name. And we thank you, Lord, that despite our sin, Despite all that we are before you as unholy people, Unworthy of the least of your mercies.

That you are the one who raises up your people. That you are the one who helps us to see That you are God and there is no other. You are the one who puts our feet on solid ground.

You are the one who helps us to go on in your strength As we look to you. And so we thank you for all that you do for us. And we pray, Lord, that you will continue to build us up as your people.

To bring us to know you more and more. To bring us to trust in you with all our hearts. To acknowledge you in all our ways. So that you would direct our paths.

[18 : 40] Lord, we ask your blessing on our time together today. We thank you for the privilege that is ours to worship and to praise your name. We thank you for the light that you have given to us through your gospel.

And we pray that you will still us before you. That you will help us, even in this time together, To be still and to know that you are God. And so hear all our prayers as we offer them up to you.

Prayers for so many things going on around us. For so many people in different circumstances. For so many events going on around the world at this time.

We thank you, Lord, that there is nothing unknown to you. Nothing hidden to you. That you see and know all things. But we come and commit ourselves and others to you in prayer.

That in all our different needs and circumstances, You will turn us towards you. That you will help us to call upon your name. We think of those who are mourning and grieving in our midst, O Lord.

[19 : 42] We thank you that your word reminds us that you are a God of all comfort. And we pray that you will comfort us only you can. That you will heal the broken hearts.

That you will be close to those who feel the way tough just now. Whether it be a recent bereavement or a bereavement maybe a long time ago.

We thank you that you know and remember us in all our different needs. So, Lord, surround people in these situations. Remember those who are unwell. We pray, Lord, for healing.

For your goodness to be upon different people who are unwell. We pray for your grace in situations that maybe will not or cannot change. Because that is not your will.

But we thank you that your grace is sufficient for every circumstance. That you provide for us even when there is nothing humanly possible for us. We thank you that you have prepared us, Lord, even for the pains of death.

[20 : 41] And we thank you, Lord, that with you that there is mercy. With you that there is hope. For it is not just about this world and this life. But Jesus came that we might have life to the full and life eternal.

And so, we pray, Lord, that you will surround us and give us that hope of the gospel. The hope that is light into all the darkness of this world. We thank you, too, of our nation, O Lord, and how far away we are from you.

We pray, Lord, for those who are ruling over us in different ways. In monarchy, in parliament, in governments of various kinds throughout our land. We see the consequences, O Lord, so clearly described in your word.

That when we turn away from you. When we look to our own ways. That we only stumble and fall. And that is where we are, Lord. We have stumbled from you. But we thank you, too, Lord, that there is a reminder in your word that righteousness exalts a nation.

And so, we pray, Lord, not for our own righteousness to be to the fore. But that we would look to the righteousness of Christ. That you would come in healing power into our midst. That you would restore our land and revive us once again.

[21 : 55] We pray, Lord, for other parts of the world, too. We've seen the earthquake in Morocco and the devastation and the loss of life there. We thank, O Lord, of all that's still being done to seek for those who are trapped.

And helping those in great need. We pray, Lord, for them. Especially those in remote places that are difficult to reach. We pray, Lord, that you will help those who are seeking to help others. And throughout the world, O Lord, we know that there is so much pain and hurt and anguish. And war and terror in so many different ways. And we just pray, Lord, that you will hear your people. We thank you that you have your people from every tribe and nation throughout the world. And we pray, Lord, that you will hear your praying church in these days. That you will do us good. That you will build us up. Lord, be with us now, we pray. And continue to go before us throughout this day and in the week ahead. That all we would do, we would do for your glory and for your sake.

[23 : 00] Hear our prayers, pardon our sins. And continue with us now. As we ask it all in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We'll sing to God's praise in Psalm 26 in the Scottish, in the Sing Psalms version, page 31 of the psalm book.

Psalm 26 on page 31. We're singing at verse 6 down to the end of the psalm.

I wash my hands in innocence and blameless is my heart. I go about your altar, Lord, the place you set apart. We'll sing from verse 6 down to the end of the psalm and the tune is Balerna.

I wash my hands in innocence and blameless is my heart.

I go about your altar, Lord, the place you set apart.

[24 : 28] I'll tell of all your awesome deeds. Proclaiming loud your place.

Your glory fills your dwelling place. I love your heart always.

Sweep not away my soul, O Lord, With those who hate your way.

Nor take away my life with those Who love to wound and slain.

For fair right hands are full of pride. They've got inequity.

[25 : 56] But I will lead a blameless life. And mercy set me free.

My feet will stand with God's protection. Upon a level place.

And in the people's gathering. I'll praise the Lord of grace.

Amen. We can turn back to our reading in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 18.

And our focus is going to be on the second of the parables that we read in verse 9 to verse 14. The Pharisee and the tax collector. We read there in verse 9 where it says, He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

[27 : 25] We've read two parables here in this passage in Luke. And parables were what Jesus used to instruct people in this day.

They're seen as maybe stories and illustrations of things that were going on around them in these times. But yet behind them all was a real serious meaning.

Parables were always interesting. And we're familiar perhaps with many of them. Many of the parables we learned maybe in our youth. For example, the parable of the sower and the seed. Where the farmer is described as going out and scattering the seed. And it's a reminder of how the word goes out and finds itself landing in different kinds of ground that gives different kinds of results.

We've got the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin. How when we've lost something we'll keep going until we find it. And how Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

[28 : 32] The parable of the prodigal son. The parable of the good Samaritan. There's so many of them that we may be familiar with. And we just maybe see them as nice stories.

Good stories. Interesting settings. And interesting situations. But there's always much more to them than that. Behind them all is always a serious challenge that Jesus gives to his people.

And in the passage that we've read. In the two parables that we see. We see Jesus telling us the reason for the parables. In the first one.

In verse one. He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. So it's a powerful reminder to us and a powerful challenge to us in our own prayer lives.

Are there times when we give up in prayer? Are there times when you lose heart in prayer? Do you feel that way? Well, Jesus is saying to always pray and not lose heart.

[29 : 41] Reminder to us that he hears, he listens to our prayers. He may not always give us what we're asking for. But we know his will will be done. And that he will give us as we need.

As we look to him. And then the second parable as we're going to look at together this morning is to be sure that we approach God in the right way.

To approach God in the right way. So how do we approach God? How are you approaching God even as you come here today to worship?

Are you prepared yourself to come and draw near to God? Are you coming in and approaching God in the right way? What we see here is a real contrast between these two who come before God in prayer.

One was proud and full of self-righteousness. The other was in anguish, full of doubt and fear.

[30 : 45] But who made a difference before God? Who came before God in the right way? There's a strong challenge to ourselves in this parable too.

You see, change is often necessary. And that's what's behind this parable too. The man who came trusting in himself and his own righteousness.

He needed to humble himself. Others realize the necessity of change and the power that God has to change.

And that's what we see in the tax collector as he came to Jesus. So how do we approach God? And what do we say to God even in our own prayers before him?

Are we proud or are we humble? You may have heard of the famous inventor Samuel Marsh. He was behind Marsh Code, the telegraph system.

[31 : 48] And he was once asked a question. Somebody asked him, Did you ever encounter a situation where you didn't know what to do?

And Samuel Marsh replied, More than once. On many occasions I found myself in a situation where I wasn't sure what to do. I couldn't see the way ahead clearly.

But he said, What I did was I knelt down and prayed to God for light and for understanding. And Samuel Marsh received many honors for his invention of the telegraph system known as Marsh Code.

But he felt undeserving of any of these honors. And he once said, I have made a valuable contribution to society. Not because I was superior to any other.

But solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone. And he was pleased to reveal it to me.

[32 : 56] He gave all honor to God. And that God used him for his glory. Here was Jesus putting a challenge to the people in and to ourselves today.

A very powerful challenge to everyone who hears this parable. To look at how we approach God. And do we give honor, a right to God for all that we are and all that we have.

Are we proud or are we humble? So I want to look at this parable under four headings. First, the parable as a whole. Secondly, we look at the people in the parable.

And the prayers that they have. And then finally, the profit that they receive. So first of all, we see the parable. And like I said, verse 9 makes it very clear to us why Jesus told this parable. He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

[34 : 08] There's two sides to that, isn't there? We could maybe think of the first one. To those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

And it's such an easy sin for us to fall into. Self-righteousness. Pride. To think as we were looking at the building blocks that we can show our good works before God.

And that we can somehow attain God's height. That we can reach up to him and say, look at what I've done. I am a good person. I am a righteous person.

And we look at our own hearts and we so often perhaps see that coming in. Every one of us.

Myself, yourself. There will be times when pride will take a hold in our hearts.

And we start looking at ourselves. How good we are. And we take our eyes off God. And so the challenge is obvious there when we see it here.

[35 : 09] It's to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. But you see there's another side to it there as well. And treated others with contempt.

Because the more we fall into the sin of looking at our own righteousness. And how good we see ourselves. The more then we look at others. And look at them and see their faults.

Find fault with them. And that's what clearly comes through in this passage for us too. There's these two sides.

What this is getting at in this parable is. What are we relying on when it comes to our own lives?

What are we relying on remembering that this has been spoken.

These two parables come just after the end of chapter 17. Where he's speaking about the coming of the kingdom of God. And you see even towards the end of that passage.

[36 : 14] How it speaks about the seriousness in chapter 17. In verse 31. On that day let the one who is on the housetop with the goods in his house. Not come down to take them away.

Likewise the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. You know he puts this into the serious context of what's happening. And how the Lord is going to come.

And what are we going to be showing before the Lord. Is it our righteousness or are we looking to his? Do you exalt yourself or do you humble yourself before God?

These parables. These parables. They're more than just interesting stories. They get to the real heart of the matter. They get into our hearts.

And they ask us. How are we before God? And you see here the contrast. Between the people in Jesus' day.

[37 : 20] The Pharisee and the tax collector. And the difference between them. And how easy it is for ourselves to look at ourselves above others. To see ourselves as good people.

And then worse than that. To look on others with contempt. And contempt is a strong word. It's almost like hatred. Disdain for these people.

We want nothing to do with them. Because we're too good for them. So there's a serious warning in this parable. A powerful warning.

It was Dwight Moody who once put it very simply. He said, be humble or you'll stumble.

Be humble or you'll stumble. If you're building your own works of righteousness before God. It's only going to fall apart.

[38 : 21] Be humble or you'll stumble. So we have this parable. It's a serious parable for us to consider.

The second thing is this. So we see the people in the parable. And again, Jesus is so powerful in the way he speaks of his parable.

In his parables. How often he uses real people in these situations. People who, those who are in his hearing, they can relate to. You think of the parable of the good Samaritan.

Such a powerful illustration to us. Because the Samaritans, they would have nothing to do with Jews. And yet, the only one who stopped to help an injured Jew was a Samaritan.

So he's using these illustrations very powerfully. And people very powerfully. And it's the same in this parable too. He speaks about one, a Pharisee.

[39 : 23] And the other, a tax collector. And when you look at them, Jesus is teaching through using the Pharisee and the tax collector. It just adds into the whole situation here.

Because they were at opposite ends of the spectrum in the community at that time. The Pharisees, they were the godly people in that day.

They were the ones who attended to so much of the things that were going on in the temple. They were leaders of the people. They were respected and looked up to. And yet, on the other hand, you have the tax collector.

They were despised and hated. They were cheats. They bribed people. They took money from people at great cost to them. Remember when Jesus met with Zacchaeus.

He was a tax collector. And Zacchaeus was a man of small stature. And the crowd, as he was trying to barge his way through, they wouldn't let him through. He was despised. And yet, Jesus said to him, Zacchaeus, come down from the tree that he'd climbed just to get a glimpse of Jesus.

[40 : 31] And how often you see the accusing Jesus of going to sit and eat with tax collectors and sinners. The two were on the same label.

Tax collectors and sinners. And that's what you have here. The Pharisee and the tax collector. A very religious man considered to be holy by everyone who saw him.

And a tax collector who was hated. But when you look at the Pharisee. And how Jesus deals with the Pharisees so often in Scripture.

You see that what he is doing with them so often is getting to their heart. There was a problem with the Pharisees and many of the Pharisees in that time. Not all of them, but many of them.

We're told of it in Matthew 23, verse 5 and 6. The problem was pride. There it says, they do all their deeds to be seen by others.

[41 : 36] Seen by others. They love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues. They were looking out for themselves.

Pride was in their heart. They were doing it all to be seen by others.

And yet, the tax collector, when you look at him. A spiritual outcast. He is the kind of person who would think, well, church is the last place I would go.

They're going to hate me there. They won't want me there. There's a strong reminder to us here. A strong challenge to us here. In our own hearts, what is our attitude?

Are we like the Pharisee? Do we perhaps end up in that situation where we can maybe go about our lives doing good things.

[42 : 34] But doing them with the wrong motives and for the wrong reasons. Doing it to be seen by others. Or doing it quietly for the Lord. The Pharisee here is one who pride has taken a hold in his heart.

But the tax collector. How would he have been viewed in these days? Well, as I said, he was hated. He was hated. These are, if you were to look at it today.

They're the kind of people that we so often perhaps, in our own hearts when they become proud, we look down on. We may be fearful of this kind of person coming into our church, what they'll bring with them.

The problems that they might bring with them as they come in here, into our lives. And yet, what Jesus is challenging and teaching us here is what is our heart like before God.

He's reminding everyone in this society to guard your heart. And to see how you approach God, not with pride and with your own righteousness.

[43 : 54] But using the tax collector as a way we are all to come before God. Humbly, beating our breast. Crying out, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Jesus is speaking to all the people in this parable. He's speaking to ourselves today. It's not about who you are. It's not about what you've done.

But that we come to Jesus in the right way. That we come knowing that only he is able to do anything for our righteousness.

To do anything for our good because we are not good in and of ourselves. But he is able to change our hearts. So we have these two people reminding us of so much of what we see in our own lives and in our own society.

To guard against pride in our own hearts. And not to look down on others with contempt. But to look to the Lord in all of this.

[45 : 01] The third thing we see here is the prayers. You see the Pharisees prayer here. In verse 10 it says, Two men went up into the temple to pray.

One a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee standing by himself prayed. God, I thank you that I am not like other men. Extortioners, unjust, adulterers.

Or see this, or even like this tax collector. And then he goes on to say, I fast twice a week.

I give tithes of all that I get. Who is he praying to? It says there he's standing by himself.

The Pharisee standing by himself prayed. There's another way that you can translate that. It could read, standing he prayed to himself.

[46 : 06] Because it's not the prayer that God is going to listen to. He's just praying to himself and those who may be in earshot round about him. Doing all to be seen and heard by others.

He's full of pride. Is that the way you pray? I hope none of us would come to God with this kind of prayer.

I thank you that I'm not like other men. Or I thank you that I'm not like this tax collector. I thank you that I'm not like so-and-so who lives down the road.

That's not how we are to approach God. John Calvin, famous theologian. He says, Every man that is puffed up with self-confidence carries on open war with God.

To whom we cannot be reconciled in any other way than by denial of ourselves. That is, by laying aside all confidence in our own virtue and righteousness.

[47 : 17] And relying on his mercy alone. That is not how the Pharisee has come. And that is not how we are to come to God in prayer either.

We are to come to God laying aside all confidence in self. And that's the difference we see with the tax collector here.

The tax collector who perhaps has even heard the Pharisee praying in this way. I thank you that I'm not like this tax collector. But the tax collector says, Standing far off.

Would not even lift up his eyes to heaven. But beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. He had nothing to offer God.

He had nothing to bring before God to say, Look at what I've done for you. Nothing. And yet his prayer is so much more powerful.

[48 : 25] God, be merciful to me, a sinner. It's recognizing what we are before God. He can't even lift up his eyes.

He beats his breast. He knows within himself he has done wrong before God. And all he can do is cry out, Have mercy on me, a sinner.

That is how we should all come to God. Because that is what we all are before God. None of us are righteous of our own making.

We can only be righteous in a right standing before God if we come in this way. Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

The tax collector's prayer is short. I think that's a reminder to us as well. There's more in these few words than any thousands of words the Pharisee could offer up.

[49 : 27] We don't have to pray long prayers. We don't have to come to God in a certain way. We are to approach him humbly.

Because he hears a humble prayer. He hears the humble cry. And there is the cry of this tax collector. Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Have you prayed that prayer? Do you need to pray that prayer? Even as a Christian, do we have to come and pray that prayer ourselves?

Because pride is taking over our hearts again. When we become proud, we look at others in contempt. And perhaps we have to cry, Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

To come in that way. Because the final thing we see here is the prophet. Both these men went into the house of prayer.

[50 : 33] Both these men were in the right place. But only one of them was there with the right motive. One was there full of pride.

The other was there full of humility. And what you see is one man got everything. And one man got nothing.

But as with Jesus' parables, it's not what you would expect. It's not what the people would have expected or even wanted to hear in his day.

The Pharisee surely is deserving of everything. This tax collector who's robbed people, he deserves nothing. And yet Jesus shows, because of the way they come and approach God, it is the opposite that is true.

One man was received by God. The Lord heard the prayer of the tax collector. The simple prayer offered up.

[51 : 36] And through sincerity, pleading with the Lord for mercy. The Lord heard it. Because you see in verse 14, it says, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. But the one who humbles himself will be exalted. It's not for us to come before God, building our blocks before him, saying, Lord, look.

Look at my righteousness. Do me good. I deserve it. That's not how we come. We come like the tax collector.

Just prone before God, on our knees before God, pleading for mercy. And what you see is the one who stood proudly is humbled.

He's brought low. But the one who was low, who humbled himself before God, is exalted. He's able to stand right before God, right in the day of judgment when he comes, because he humbled himself.

[52 : 56] Are we too stubborn to change? Are we trusting in ourselves too much? Do we need to repent of pride in our hearts and humble ourselves before God?

In September of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia. One was a cargo ship.

The other was a passenger ship. And both ships sank. And there was a great loss of life. There was much sadness in what took place there.

But there was further sadness later on, when the investigation revealed the cause of this incident. There was no bad weather.

There was no fog. There was good visibility. The waters were calm. So what went wrong? Pride.

[54 : 02] Pride. Both captains of the ships refused to alter course for the other. They were waiting for the other one to change direction.

Because they saw themselves as the important person. Pride was the cause. It wasn't until it was too late that they tried to take any action.

And disaster struck. They were both too proud to change direction. And it's a warning to ourselves. Not to be so proud. Not to change direction. Not to humble ourselves before God. Until it's too late. Until disaster strikes.

But to humble ourselves before God. Pleading with Him that He will help us to change direction. And to have a humble heart before Him.

[55 : 13] A man called Andrew Murray, who's written many books. He spoke in this way. He says, To have a soft, humble heart as this. To have a blessed home in the Lord.

Where I can go in and shut the door. And kneel to my Father in secret. And be at peace as in a deep sea of calmness.

When all around is trouble. To find that refuge place. That place to be able to come to God.

Not in confidence of ourselves. But confident in Christ. In His finished work. To humble ourselves before Him.

And not to let pride lead to destruction. He told this parable that some. Who trusted in themselves. That they were righteous.

[56 : 12] And treated others. With contempt. Let's make sure that's not our hearts. Hearts that are proud.

Trusting in our own righteousness. Treating others with contempt. Let us be like the tax collector. Humble ourselves before God.

That He will exalt us. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven. We thank you for your word. For these wonderful parables.

That you have given. We thank you for the great instruction. But also the great challenge. That is in them. For they remind us Lord. That we can so often become a people. Who are proud.

And full of pride in our hearts. That reminds us too. That we are to humble ourselves before God.

And so we ask oh Lord. That you will teach us. That you will rebuke us.

[57 : 09] That you will build us up. Through your word. That you will help us to look to Jesus. And his righteousness. His finished work. We ask it in his name. Amen.

We are going to conclude by singing to God's praise. In Psalm 55. We sang it at the beginning. Psalm 55.

We are going to sing from verse 19 to verse 22. Three stanzas. Page 72 of the psalm. My God enthroned forevermore. Will hear. And will repay.

Those men. Who have no fear of God. And never change. Their way. Verse 22 says. Oh cast your burden. On the Lord. And he will care for you. He will never let the righteous fall.

But bring him safely through. We sing from verse 19 to 22. To God's praise. The tune is martyrdom. My God enthroned forevermore.

[58 : 14] Will hear and will repay. Those men who have no fear of God. And never change. throne forevermore will hear and will repay those men who have no fear of God and never change their way.

This man attacks his loyal friends and breaks his solemn word as truth has fought God is his speech that in his heart's a sword.

O cast your pardon on the Lord and he will care for you.

He'll never let a righteous fall but bring him safely through.

After the benediction I'll go to the main door. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

[60 : 17] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.■■■